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1918

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War-Ballads and Verses

Third Series



BY
William Hathorn Mills

Dedicated to Our Men-at-Arms

WAR-BALLADS and VERSES

Third Series

BY
WILLIAM HATHORN MILLS

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
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52
53
54
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56
57
58
59
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61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100

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1918
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NOV 21 1918

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2001

A Battle Prayer

O Lord of war, our armies fight
Against a ruthless tyranny;
Strengthen, we pray, with Thine Own might
Their hearts, and give them victory.

O Prince of peace, bring in thro' war
The peace of God—peace all divine—
And may that peace for evermore
Keep us at one with Thee and Thine.

Foreword

This third series of War-Ballads collects some published leaflets and odd bits of verse, omitted in the earlier series, and adds some later verses. It completes a set of booklets published mainly for distribution to our fighting men. The writer, a septuagenarian, must now hand on the torch.

Contents

	Page
A Battle-Prayer	3
War	7
Par Nobile	8
Huns	9
Quousque?	11
Blasphemy	12
The Hymn of Hate.....	12
Crusaders	14
Romania	15
Echoes from Tooley Street.....	15
For Valour	17
Number One	18
The Doom of Ahab.....	20
A Self-Accuser	20
A Round Table.....	21
Tall Talk	22
Vive la France.....	22
Some Columbian	23
Grit	23
Verdun	24
At the Front.....	25

NOTE.—For details of facts see The Bryce Report on alleged German outrages; Belgians Under the German Eagle, by Jean Massart; German Atrocities, an official investigation, by J. H. Morgan; The New York Evening Sun, August 10, 1914; The Los Angeles Examiner, June 25, 1917; The Los Angeles Times, January 26, 1918; The Bookman, March, 1918.

War

“WAR”—’twas a soldier spoke—“is hell”;
 Aye, and yet Heaven itself once knew
 War, when the hosts of Michael
 Fought with the Dragon and his crew.

War waged by fiends is devilry;
 It’s sin and pain and nothing more;
 But angels, too, fight ceaselessly,
 And their war is a holy war.

“I came not to bring peace on earth,
 But war”, proclaimed Creation’s Lord;
 As travail-pangs shape for the birth,
 His peace is fashioned by the sword.

All human wars make misery—
 Anguish that Heaven alone can heal;
 Yes, but from out the agony
 Spring better things; woe leads to weal.

The conscience of the world acquires
 A truer sense of what should be:
 Learns to desire what Right desires:
 Learns to love peace and unity.

And in the end Right conquers Might;
 It casts down tyranny and pride;
 The fight is long, but there is light,
 The light of peace, at even-tide.

Nor that alone; for they may win,
 Who fight for Truth and Liberty,

As taught by war's stern discipline,
A loftier humanity.

They, who in peace were ne'er-do-weels,
In war see what they were; and then
A something to their hearts appeals,
That conquers self, and makes them men.

The sense of duty, Honour's claims,
The spirit of camaraderie,
The tempers born of noble aims,
Are as constraints to chivalry.

Under the storm of shot and shell
They find their comrades staunch and true;
It lifts them—ah, if war be hell,
It is a purgatory too.

Evil is in the world, and, till
Cast out by war, must vex our life;
The Cross meant war; it means it still,
But means, too, victory in the strife.

Par Nobile Fratrum

(Written for the British-American League, Los Angeles.)

STAND side by side, John Bull
And Jonathan,
Serving a dutiful
Service of man.
Union is strength; thus strong,
In the long fight
Waged between Right and Wrong,
Stand for the Right.

Stand up for world-wide peace,
 For Liberty;
 Let your names spell surcease
 Of tyranny.
 Rid every little State
 Of the grim fear
 That foes may violate
 All it holds dear.

Let your twin navies keep
 Watch o'er the sea,
 And make the vasty deep
 A highway free—
 Free to all argosies
 Bearing their stores
 Of foods and merchandise
 To far-off shores.

So shall your influence,
 Your banded might,
 Work, under Providence,
 A reign of Right.
 So shall the world become
 A Unity,
 And every hearth and home
 A sanctuary.

Huns

THEY murder babes, shame women, loot,
 Use poisonous gases, liquid fire,
 Asphyxiating shells, and shoot
 Prisoners, to glut their lust and ire.

They mutilate and insult the slain
 With foul and hideous outrages,
 Torpedo harmless liners, rain
 Bombs on defenceless villages.

Women and children, roped, are made
 Screens for their firing companies;
 Red Cross and White Flag hang displayed
 O'er their machine-guns as disguise.

Liars and—well, there's mystery
 In their idea that other souls
 Will take what's a transparent lie
 For truth, the same not being moles.

No form of "frightfulness", it seems,
 Is practised by these sons of blood—
 No horror mocking nightmare-dreams—
 But Kultur proves it right and good.

Kultur? Such culture is of hell;
 It's all a blend of sophistries
 And lies, a creed most infidel,
 A cult of Mephistopheles.

The Pharisees were by holy lips
 Called Hypocrites in days of yore;
 Prussian hypocrisies eclipse
 All theirs, and, I guess, a thousand more.

One crowning act of infamy
 Challenged them, and to them seemed good;
 An English nurse, they said, must die.
 She died. They shot her in cold blood.

This is the race that claims to be
 God's choice, God's glory, and God's crown.
 Ah Heaven, avenge the blasphemy,
 And cast this brood of monsters down.

Quousque Tandem?

I T seemed as tho' the Huns had reached
 The summit of their infamies
 When they shot Nurse Cavell, and preached
 A gospel of atrocities.

They hadn't; it yet remained to wreck
 And sink—not trading ships alone,
 But—floating hospitals, nor reck
 That half the wounded were their own.

As for the foul obscenities
 That marked the track of their retreat,
 Apes would have scorned such acts as these;
 Fiends had disdained such dirty feet.

Viler atrocities, and yet
 More vile, continually swell
 The tale of their offence, and set
 New records on the charts of hell.

The wonder is that all the world,
 From North to South, from West to East,
 Has not arisen in wrath, and hurled
 Destruction on the abysmal Beast.

Blasphemy

THEY knew their emperors were but men—
 And often brutes at that,
 Who rose to power thro' blood, and then
 On blood and groans grew fat—
 Yet servile Romans deified
 Those emperors, and gave
 Then honours, such as crazy pride
 Alone could seek or crave.

Even Napoleon, tho' he thought,
 In mad pursuit of fame,
 To rule the wide world, never sought
 Such blasphemous acclaim.
 But German bards now bend their knees,
 In rank idolatry,
 And call their Kaiser "Prince of Peace",
 Nor reck the blasphemy.

Aye, and they name him "Lord of War"—
 A title all divine,
 And think their hordes, with him as Thor,
 Will "conquer in that sign".
 Whose is the fault? His, or the crew's,
 That vaunts his majesty?
 We know not, but we tell that Muse
 Her blasphemy is a lie.

"The Hymn of Hate"

"HELL has no fury like a woman scorned"—
 The poet must have scorned some dame, I
 fear—

That's Prussia's temper now, who, tho' forewarned,
 Would not believe the warning, would not hear.

She nursed the fond illusion in her soul
 That Britain's heart was set on world-wide rule;
 She wished to share that first, then grasp the whole,
 And so she broke the peace. O purblind fool!

She thought that Britons would stand idly by,
 While upon Frank and Slav she worked her will;
 Then she would rest awhile; then, by and by,
 Britain would have to pass thro' the same mill.

What made her think of Heaven as glad to be
 Her tool? What robbed her of all common
 sense?

What bade her lie, and reckon it piety?
 Just this—a mad lust of omnipotence.

Treaties to her were scraps of paper, worth
 As bonds and pledges something less than
 naught;

That Might is Right, that lordship of the earth
 Is hers by right divine—that was her thought.

Therefore, when Britain kept her blighted word
 To Belgium, and refused the proffered bait,
 Britons became to her a race abhorred;
 Her feigned affection turned to rancorous hate.

That was the inspiration of the hymn
 That rants of English lies and perfidy,
 That reckons God a Hun, and calls on Him
 To punish England for her treachery.

Read in this light it is a hymn of praise,
 A testimonial, a certificate
 Of blameless character, a creed that says
 "Falsehood we love; Honour and Truth we hate".

Crusaders

A RED CROSS UNIT left, on dit,*
 America for France,
 Owing Asclepios, it might be
 Supposed, allegiance.

What did they do when they got there?
 Did they request the Chief
 To use them anyhow, anywhere,
 In ministries of relief?

Not they. As tho' an urgent call
 Claimed them for instant war,
 They promptly 'listed, one and all,
 In the French Flying Corps.

I told the tale, half doubtfully,
 To an old invalid,
 A strong religionist; his reply
 Came back crisp as a creed.

"A very proper spirit", he said;
 "Quite the right thing to do";
 And, as he spoke, his aged head
 Wagged its full sanction too.

O Red Cross Unit, I'm inclined
 To think you must have had
 A notion in your conjoint mind
 That was not wholly bad.

*—at the members' own cost, and before America entered the war.

Romania

FOUNDED, some eighteen hundred years ago,
 By Trajan, as a Roman colony
 To guard one frontier of his empery
 From inroads of the Asiatic foe—
 That was your birth, Romania, and, tho'
 O'erswept by wave on wave of savagery,
 Still have you kept unbroke your unity,
 And risen again from wrack and overthrow.
 To-day you fight for what you deemed to be,
 Aye, and what is, the Right, and, tho' betrayed
 And wronged, have never flinched, never backed
 down.
 Courage, brave heart! Fight on, and you shall see
 Your hopes fulfilled, your sacrifice repaid,
 And your true heritage made all your own.

August 23, 1917.

Echoes from Tooley Street

“WE, the people of all England”—thus import-
 antly began
 Some demand that claimed all England's voice
 as its authority:

Something that professed to better Magna Charta's scope and plan.

Well, and what men, and how many, signed the paper? Tailors three.

Cheek unique? Well, no; we've got a talker who can match the three—

Nay, can go one better than they went in calm effrontery;

"We will", or "We will not"—thus he speaks, implying that the "We"

Comes from Uncle Sam concentrated in his personality.

"We will send our boys", he says, "to fight for England only when

She has rallied hers—her slackers: there are half a million here,

Aye, and more at home—reserves magnificent of fighting men".

"We"—that is, he claims to voice the will of half a hemisphere.

Not for England is the battle, not for Belgium, not for France;

Not for any single nation do the war-drums beat their roll;

'Tis the whole world's need that, clamant, bids America "Advance",

And its battle-cries are "Justice: Freedom: Peace: from pole to pole".

Aye, and she has come to know it, and is arming for the fray;

Not for this State, nor for that State, is she
 marshalling her war;
 Voices as of many waters call her, and her actions
 say
 That which bids all lesser voices hold their peace
 for evermore.

For Valour

GEORGE WILSON, newsboy, who had been
 A soldier, and had served his time,
 Rejoined the Colours, being keen
 To prove he hadn't passed his prime.

He hadn't; he was at his best;
 Aye, and that best was good indeed;
 The issue made him manifest
 As stark in fight and staunch in need.

Hard by Verneuil, his company
 By a machine-gun was annoyed;
 He made his mind up speedily
 That the pom-pom must be destroyed.

So, with one comrade, this true son
 Of Mars set out on his design;
 His mate soon fell; Wilson went on
 Until he reached the firing-line.

He shot seven men who worked the gun,
 Seized it, and turned it on the foe,
 Till, all its ammunition done,
 He reckoned that it was time to go.

That wasn't all; as he began
 To start upon his homeward tramp,
 He spied a wounded rifleman,
 And bore him safely back to camp.

What further? Later wounds, alack!
 Disabled him from acts of war;
 So to his old trade he went back,
 And sells newspapers as before.

His life is now a peaceful life;
 Aye, but he wears a memory
 Of how he bore him in the strife—
 A bronze cross formy—the V. C.

Number One

“WE’VE had soft soap, a lot of it, too much of
 it”—he said—
 “Tall talk of England’s glory, and the winning
 of the war;
 “What we want now”—it came to this—“is beef and
 beer and bread,
 And talk of England’s glory is just soap, and
 nothing more”.

O selfish soul and sordid, have you ever laid to heart
 What glory means to England? You reckon it
 renown
 In war, but battle-glory is glory but in part,
 And the glory of Old England is a spiritual
 crown.

Aye, it reflects the glory that rests upon the Cross,
 Or that which painters picture in the halo of a
 Saint;

It's the glory of an honour, that chooses rather loss
 Than gain won thro' dishonour, gain that's
 smirched by stain or taint:

It stands in the fulfilment of every promise plight:
 In the service of the duties to which each soul is
 born;

It takes for rules of conduct the high laws of Truth
 and Right;

It champions the weak, and laughs fainthearted-
 ness to scorn.

Redress of wrongs, world-peace secured against ty-
 rannic Might,

The weal of little peoples, the bright lamp of
 Freedom lit—

This is what England seeks that she may keep her
 honour bright;

This is the glory that she craves, and you—you
 mock at it!

You want your wages raised. Ah well, compare the
 wage you get

With the pittance of the soldier who is fighting
 for your homes;

You are of those who suffer least, and Justice will,
 you bet,

Lesson you pretty sternly when the day of reck-
 oning comes.

Don't dare to speak of England, as tho' in any way
 You represented what she is, or wills that you
 should be;
 Speak for yourself, and for your mates maybe, but
 do not lay
 Upon your souls the added guilt of a foul blas-
 phemy.

The Doom of Ahab

AHAB served Baal, and thereby
 Made Israel to sin;
 He was for his iniquity
 Cut off with all his kin.

Wilhelm, the self-idolator,
 Makes Germany to sin;
 He dooms to Ahab's doom therefore
 Himself, and all his kin.

The greater power, the greater sin,
 The greater punishment—
 Aye, and the larger; kith and kin
 May share the chastisement.

Bane of the Hohenzollern line,
 Wilhelm, thy race is run;
 And—word of doom to thee and thine—
 Thy record is, "Ill done".

A Self-Accuser

HE talks of Russia's tyranny,
 Of France on vengeance bent,
 Of England's shameless treachery,
 And counts it argument.

He but imputes himself; each lie
Reflects his own foul guilt;
His acts repeat the indictment—aye,
And prove it to the hilt.

And yet he claims that history
Will clear him of all blame;
Nay, it will lay Cain's infamy,
Cain's brand, upon his name.

E'en now the fell Erinyes
Are hard upon his track;
They hunt him—hell's winged huntresses,
And who shall call them back?

A Round Table

OR ever the world-war began,
 Wall-maps, designed for use in schools,
 Showed on one sheet the whole earth's span,
 And on it Britain, blazoned gules.

They taught, those maps, that Britain meant—
Not the small British isles alone,
But—a world-empire, whose content
Embraced five nations, blent in one.

What then was true, is yet more true
As thing are now; Great Britain still,
And Greater Britain, mean not two
Britains, but one—one folk, one will.

Gules, that is, rose-red—mystic hue
Of love, of beauty, of emprise

To champion innocence, and renew
The fruits and flowers of Paradise.

That is the temper that unites
Them of the British family
In one great fellowship of Knights,
Who stand for Right and Liberty.

Tall Talk

“OUR iron will”—the Reichstag’s President
Said—“shall turn into deeds”.
Nay; the Hun will, and all its foul intent,
Shall be as broken reeds.

“The sharp steel of”—what he was pleased to call—
“The clean sword in our hands
Shall hew the way to fortune”—shall grab all,
That is, earth’s seas and lands.

For bombast and for braggadocio
That well might take the cake;
It would perhaps, but that, if it were so,
The Kaiser’s heart would break.

Vive la France!

FAIR France”, we said; “Fair France”, we say;
Still fair despite the outraging foe;
The beauty that is hers to-day
Is not a thing of outward show.

Beauty of pluck, of chivalry,
Of self-devotion, of romance—
All this is hers, and bids us say,
“Ah, qu’elle est belle! Ah, la belle France”!

Some Columbian

HE'D got his pom-pom just about
 Rigged up upon its stand,
 When a bit of shrapnel found him out,
 And took off his right hand.

The Huns were passing out of range,
 And it filled his soul with ire,
 For with one hand he couldn't change
 His pom-pom's line of fire.

What could he do? With his left hand
 He drew his pocket-gun,
 And shot till that indignant band
 Came back to spoil his fun.

Then his machine-gun spoke, and threw
 Death at them till they fled—
 All that could flee—a scattered crew,
 For most of them were dead.

Two mates, brought by a happy chance,
 Found him, afaint with pain;
 They got him to the Ambulance,
 And he wants to fight again.

Grit

THE stretcher-bearers searched one night
 A battle-field in France
 To bring men wounded in the fight
 Back to the Ambulance;
 'Twas grim work; all around were lying
 Wounded and helpless, dead and dying.

They came to a sore-wounded Kelt,
 Paused, looked at him, and said,
 "He's dead"; but, as one stooped and felt
 The corpse, it muttered, "Dead!
 Not I; and"—the voice grew almost strident—
 "I'm hanged if I mean to die". He didn't.

Verdun

"ON ne passe pas". They shall not pass,
 For France has barred the way,
 What tho' their legions, mass on mass,
 Batter her fenced array.

"On ne passe pas". They shall not pass;
 Ere they can reach their goal,
 French guns shall mow them down like grass,
 And shake their tyrant's soul.

"On ne passe pas". They shall not pass;
 Force cannot break a will,
 Whose motto, "Toujours de l'audace",
 Makes France unconquered still.

"On ne passe pas". They shall not pass;
 A mightier defence
 Than bars of steel and gates of brass
 Defies their insolence.

"On ne passe pas". They shall not pass;
 Heroes of long-ago ,
 By blood-bond, by l'esprit de race,
 Summoned, confront the foe.

"On ne passe pas". They shall not pass;
 Roland is here, and mark,
 Where gleam her morion and cuirass,
 A vision of Jeanne d'Arc.

"On ne passe pas". They shall not pass;
 Not France alone says "Nay";
 The sword that turned the prophet's ass
 Is drawn for her to-day.

"On ne passe pas". They shall not pass;
 The way by which they came
 Shall see them hurrying back, Dieu grace,
 In terror and in shame.

At the Front

"ADVANCE, America, Advance"—
 That was the call that rang,
 Thundered from Belgium and from France
 By battle-roar and clang.

The Great Republic heard, and yet
 Held back from day to day.
 What made her pause as loth to set
 Her battle in array?

This—that she had not yet one heart,
 One undivided soul;
 Self-centred atoms stood apart,
 And each had its own goal.

Aye, and old jealousies had place
 In her perplexity;
 Not of one mind, one will, one race,
 Was all her family.

Peace-prophets preached. Europe's affairs,
 Her wars, her aims, her need—
 These things were no concern of theirs;
 That was their old-time creed.

Only the witness of events,
 And what men learnt thereby,
 Might weld these jarring elements
 Into a Unity.

It came. Hearts bowed to Right's demand,
 And, when the war-alarms
 Rang out at last across the land,
 A nation sprang to arms.

And now not least of those who fight
 To beat the tyrant down,
 Whose battle-words are Truth and Right,
 Columbia holds her own.

"Advance, America, Advance;
 Come to the front in all
 That makes for world-deliverance
 From Ill". That's Gabriel's call.



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